

Message Text

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ACTION AGRE-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-14 ISO-00 EB-08 OES-07 EPA-04 COME-00

TRSE-00 /034 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5606

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 17043

E O 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, MX

SUBJECT: SUSPENSION OF MANUFACTURE OF ETHYLENE DIBROMIDE

SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS BEEN INFORMED EPA MAY BAN MANUFACTURE AND USE OF ETHYLENE DIBROMIDE (EDB) A CHEMICAL IMPORTANT IN FUMIGATION OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. SUCH AN ACTION COULD PROVE DAMAGING TO MEXICO'S ECONOMY AND MAY INCREASE DANGER TO PRODUCTION OF U. S. HORTICULTURAL INDUSTRY. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) SUSPENDED MANUFACTURE OF THE FRUIT FUMIGANT AND GASOLINE ADDITIVE ETHYLENE DIBROMIDE IN MID-SEPTEMBER THEN RESCINDED SUSPENSION IN FAVOR OF REBUTTABLE PRESUMPTION AGAINST REGISTRATION (RPAR). THIS LATTER ROUTE ALLOWS MANUFACTURERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHALLENGE EPA EVIDENCE THAT AN IMMINENT HAZARD EXISTS THROUGH CONTINUED USE OF EDB. EMBASSY ALSO UNDERSTANDS THAT OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (OSHA) CONSIDERING TIGHTEN CONTROLS ON EXPOSURE OF WORKERS AND EMISSIONS FROM MANUFACTURING PLANTS. IN VIEW OF THESE RESTRICTIONS IT IS PROBABLE THAT MANUFACTURERS WILL BE UNWILLING TO TAKE OPPORTUNITY TO REBUT EPA ORDER DUE TO COST INVOLVED AND UNCLASSIFIED

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RELATIVELY SMALL MARKET FOR EDB. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS ONE OF TWO U.S. MANUFACTURERS ALREADY RECALLING OUTSTANDING STOCKS OF EDB. ONLY OTHER KNOWN SOURCE OF SUPPLY IS INDIA.

2. WE DO NOT FEEL COMPETENT TO COMMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL OR HEALTH ASPECTS OF MANUFACTURE AND USE OF EDB EITHER AS A GASOLINE ADDITIVE OR AS A FUMIGANT, BUT WE FEEL IT

WORTHWHILE TO BRING TO THE DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CHEMICAL TO MEXICO'S ECONOMY AND THE POSSIBLE IMPACT ON THAT ECONOMY IF EDB'S USE AS A FUMIGANT WERE TO BE BANNED.

A) MEXICO EXPORTS ANNUALLY TO U.S. OVER \$12 MILLION WORTH OF FRESH CITRUS AND MANGOES AS WELL AS LARGE VOLUMES TO JAPAN AND EUROPE. BECAUSE OF PRESENCE IN MEXICO OF FRUIT FLIES OF ANASTREPHA SPECIES, THIS FRUIT MUST BE FUMIGATED WITH EDB PRIOR TO ACCEPTANCE BY RECIPIENT NATION.

B) NORTHWEST MEXICO IS FREE OF ANASTREPHA SP. MEXICO AND USDA HAVE AGREEMENT THAT ALL HOSTS DESTINED TO NORTHWEST MEXICO MUST BE FUMIGATED WITH EDB TO PROTECT FRUIT INDUSTRY OF CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA. IT IS DOUBTFUL MEXICO COULD PROHIBIT SHIPMENT OF FRUIT TO NORTHWEST MEXICO IN ABSENCE OF ADEQUATE TREATMENT.

C) A BAN ON THE USE OF EDB WOULD THREATEN THE SUCCESS OF THE JOINT USDA/SECRETARIAT OF AGRICULTURE PROGRAM FOR THE CONTROL AND ERADICATION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN FRUIT FLY. AT PRESENT THE MEDFLY IS CONFINED TO AN AREA CLOSE TO THE FRONTIER WITH GUATEMALA AND THE MOVEMENT OF MEDFLY HOSTS IS CONFINED TO THOSE THAT CAN BE TREATED WITH EDB. (AVOCADOES CANNOT BE FUMIGATED AGAINST MEDFLY AND CONSEQUENTLY CANNOT BE SHIPPED FROM THE QUARANTINED AREA).
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TO DATE THIS PROGRAM HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN LIMITING THE SPREAD OF THE MEDFLY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ALLOWING MOVEMENT OF FRUIT FROM THE AREA. IF IT WERE NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO USE EDB AS A FUMIGANT, MEXICAN AGRICULTURAL OFFICIALS WOULD BE UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE TO ALLOW THE MOVEMENT OF UNTREATED MEDFLY AND MEXICAN FRUITFLY HOSTS FROM THE AFFECTED AREA. THIS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY RESULT IN THE U. S. HAVING TO TAKE ACTION TO CLOSE THE FRONTIER AGAINST IMPORTS OF HOSTS OF EITHER FRUITFLY. (AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, USDA HAS TAKEN THE UNPRECEDENTED ACTION OF ALLOWING CONTINUED IMPORTS OF HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTS FROM MEXICO DESPITE THE PRESENCE IN THE COUNTRY OF THE MEDFLY. THIS IS POSSIBLE ONLY SO LONG AS IT CAN BE CONFINED TO A SMALL AREA AND THAT AREA STRICTLY QUARANTINED. IN ABSENCE OF THE QUARANTINE, CONTINUED IMPORTS COULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED.)

3. THE VALUE OF MEXICO'S EXPORTS OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES SUCH AS CITRUS, MANGOES, TOMATOES, PEPPERS, CUCUMBERS, EGGPLANT AND MELONS HAS RANGED FROM US\$180 TO \$260 MILLION ANNUALLY SINCE 1970. THE U. S. CONSUMER WOULD ALSO BE SERIOUSLY AFFECTED AS A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF WINTER

VEGETABLES CONSUMED IN U. S. COMES FROM MEXICO.

4. USDA SPECIALISTS STATE THAT NO SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE AND THAT EXTENSIVE RESEARCH WILL BE REQUIRED TO DEVELOP AN ADEQUATE SUBSTITUTE TO EDB. TWO OTHER POSSIBLE TREATMENTS HAVE SEVERE SHORTCOMINGS. PHOSTOXIN REQUIRES A TREATMENT PERIOD OF SEVENTY-TWO HOURS, MAKING IT VIRTUALLY UNUSABLE GIVEN THE PERISHABLE NATURE OF SOME OF THE FRUITS AND THE SHEER VOLUME OF FRUITS TO BE TREATED. A HOT WATER DIP CAN BE USED BUT IT DAMAGES SOME FRUIT AND ACCELERATES THE MATURATION PROCESS. OTHER

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5607

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PROCESSES HAVE BEEN TRIED AND ABANDONED BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT EFFECTIVE IN KILLING FRUIT FLIES.

5. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS USDA PETITIONING EPA TO MAINTAIN AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF EDB AS A QUARANTINE TREATMENT IN VIEW OF RELATIVELY SMALL AMOUNT USED, THE LACK OF AN EFFECTIVE AND ECONOMICAL ALTERNATIVE, AND THE DRASTIC EFFECT A SUSPENSION WOULD CAUSE ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL TRADE.

6. AN EPA SUSPENSION OF U. S. MANUFACTURE OF EDB OR BAN OF ITS USE WOULD NOT PREVENT MEXICO FROM OBTAINING EDB FROM INDIA. HOWEVER, MEXICO NORMALLY FOLLOWS LEAD OF U.S. IN SUCH MATTERS. MEXICO AGRICULTURAL OFFICIALS PRIVATELY STATE THAT IF U. S. BANS USE OF EDB MEXICO WILL LIKELY FOLLOW SUIT.

7. DEPARTMENT MAY USE THIS INFORMATION AS IT DEEMS APPROPRIATE. LUCEY

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Message Attributes

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Status: NATIVE
Subject: SUSPENSION OF MANUFACTURE OF ETHYLENE DIBROMIDE SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS BEEN INFORMED EPA MAY BAN MANUFACTURE AND USE OF ETHYLENE DIBROMIDE (EDB) A CHE MICAL IMP
TAGS: EAGR, SENV, MX
To: STATE
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